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63 prayer for Natl Socialism.
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THE CHURCH AND THE POLITICAL PROBLEM OF OUR DAY

by

KARL BARTH

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A

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I

The Church is a people consisting of those who have found in Jesus Christ their own comfort and hope and the comfort and hope of the whole world, and who therefore have discovered their service in bearing witness before the world, which without Him is lost, to Jesus Christ in His offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.

It is necessary as a foundation for the handling of our theme to make clear to ourselves briefly what we mean when we speak of the *Church*. We may therefore begin with a definition of the Church—which is true both with regard to etymology and her essence: the Church is at all events a *people*. It is a congregation, an assembly, a community, as Luther loved to say and rightly said. But we must not lose sight of what is meant here by the word "people" in particular. The idea peculiar to

this concept has first of all in its essence to do with the connection (even the unity) of the Church with the people of Israel, whose place and function the Church has taken, one might say, automatically with the putting to death and the resurrection of Jesus its Messiah. There is also the consideration that in its form the word "people" expresses more distinctly than all the other concepts the objective strength and necessity of the Church's fellowship. As a people is naturally held together by its common origin, language and history, so the Church is held together by a condition common to all her members. It is precisely this condition which binds, nay unites, the Church besides with the pre-Christian people of Israel, and which proves her to be its legitimate successor, and the one who has taken the place of post-Christian Jewry. But the condition through which the Church forms a people along with pre-Christian Israel, and in a certain sense along with post-Christian Israel also, consists very simply in the person and work of its Messiah Jesus. The simple fact that He who was rejected by Israel, was acknowledged with

glory by Israel's God, by the Creator and Lord of Heaven and Earth, is the comfort and hope of the Church—her comfort and her hope and, as she truly knows, the comfort and hope of the whole world.

Let the members of the Church (and in them the Church herself) look backward in time—backward on the path along which they have come. They must then see their rights before God as forfeited and their cause as lost. In view of this, as they look back, their *comfort* and the ground of their confidence in life consists in Jesus Christ's teaching, sacrificial death and demonstration of power, as it took place at the beginning of this path of theirs, and at the beginning of time. Let them look forward in time—forward on the path along which they have yet to go; then their *hope* and the ground of their joy with which they face and enter the mysteries and sufferings of the future and finally certain death, consists in the resurrection of the dead, the setting up of the Kingdom of God, and the coming into being of the new Heaven and the new Earth, as it will be revealed when Jesus comes again. But the One, whom the Church sees as her

comfort and hope at the beginning and end of *her* paths, she sees also at the beginning and end of every path. Him whom she knows as *her* Lord, she knows as the Lord of *all* men—a Lord who is still hidden but who is at the last finally to be revealed, and above all who is already now reigning. Because she honours and loves, proclaims and worships His power in her *own* midst, she is fully conscious and certain that to Him is given *all* power both in Heaven and upon earth; for He has told her so.

Just because she is certain of this, the Church in all her members is called to *service*. She cannot have an inner life without having at the same time a life which expresses itself outwardly as well. She cannot hear her Lord and not hear the groaning of the Creation, the sighing of Jews and Gentiles still far from Him and yet already belonging to Him, the sighing of the whole world lost apart from Him and yet in Him already placed under the promise of salvation. She cannot receive His grace without receiving in it and with it the charge to proclaim reconciliation. She cannot receive light and not give out light herself. But not through the aid of light that is foreign

to her! And also not by kindling her own light—but she must do it by reflecting that light which has come to herself for all the world. In performing her service the Church may neither turn to the right nor to the left. But she is at the same time neither *primal* nor *creative*. The Church is simply the body of Christ. Her sovereignty consists in her simply having to *repeat*—to repeat in human weakness what Jesus Christ in divine power was, is and will be. That is the Church's service. It is her service of witness. The Prophet who discloses the Father to her and to the whole world, the Priest who is intercessor before God for her and for the whole world, the King who is the Lord and Saviour of all the world—the Church herself is not this Prophet, Priest and King, just as little as the Jews and Gentiles with their power and art and wisdom could be that, for her or for themselves. But the Church can, may and has to bear witness to Him who is all that and is thereby her reconciliation and all the world's reconciliation; her comfort and all the world's comfort; her hope and all the world's hope.

It is by bearing witness to this and to this

only that the Church has to perform her service in the world. Consequently there are no other claims or tasks which she has to regard or observe. But in the performing of this service she can in principle allow no boundaries and no limitations to be set to her. In principle there is no person or thing in the world in relation to which the Church would not be under obligation to let her witness be heard, the witness to the three-fold Office of Jesus Christ.

Where is this Church to be found? Where is the people which is engaged in this service? Have we been referring to the Confessional Church in Germany? Certainly we have been talking of it too. And of the Churches in England and France? Yes, we have meant them as well. And have we been speaking of our own Swiss Cantonal Churches? Why should they be excluded? And have we been speaking of ourselves, of our meeting and of those of us gathered here on this occasion in Wipkingen? Is it not God's will and God's truth that we have in fact been speaking of ourselves as well? Need there be any who are hypocrites, or indifferent, or are leading

men astray, or themselves have been led astray, of whom we might *not* have been talking just now? No, these may be all included. Let every one ask himself whether he is not constantly one of these himself! The Church of which we have spoken always exists where ever the call to the Church, coming through the Word of God itself, is issued and is heard. Where ever that happens—in the very midst of the hypocrites, the indifferent, the misleaders, and the misled—for Israel has always been all this—at that point there exists the people which has found its own comfort and hope and that of all the world in Jesus Christ, and its service in the world in witnessing to His Prophecy, His Priesthood, and His Kingdom. But that this happens is always and everywhere a matter of decision; of a decision both divine and human, a decision of revelation and of faith. We shall do well in all that follows to remember that, when we are speaking of the Church, we are always speaking of this decision as well.

II

True witnessing to Jesus Christ occurs necessarily in the unity of two things, a definite repetition of the confession of Him as the One who has come to us as Son of God and Saviour and will come again, and of the actualising of this confession in definite decisions in relation to those contemporary questions which agitate the Church and the world.

The witnessing to Jesus Christ through the Church, to which in particular we have now to turn, is, when it is real, always a definite repetition of the *confession* of Jesus Christ. It is a *repetition*—for there is but *one* confession of Him, as He Himself is *one* Lord, as His Spirit is *one*, as there is *one* baptism in His Name, and but *one* faith in Him. Hence the Church with her confession can merely repeat, simply join in the confession of the Prophets

who bore witness to Jesus Christ beforehand, and of the Apostles who saw His Glory. She can always simply reply to what He Himself, as Lord and Head of the Church, has said to His Prophets and Apostles and through them to the Church in all ages. But in the confession of the Church it is always a matter of a definite repetition. It is a repetition conditioned by the various times allowed to the Church in God's patience, and by the various possibilities, which the Providence of God has assigned to her, with their various dangers and promises. He who has come to us as Son of God and Saviour and will come again, *lives* in the witness borne by His Prophets and Apostles. Holy Scripture is not dead, it *lives*! It goes along a path and in it, in its continually self-renewing self-exposition, Jesus Christ Himself goes along this path. And this path of His in the words of His first witnesses the Church in her confession of Him has to take along with Him. For this reason all her repetitions, if they are true witnessing to Jesus Christ, will be definite repetitions—definite through their being defined by definite sections of this way of His, and not just mere verbal recitations of

confession of faith in Him! If it is true that the recitation of the confessions of the Bible and of the Early Church most certainly neither can nor may be left out, yet the Church's confession of her faith never can and never may exhaust itself in such recitation. On the contrary, as it repeats these, it must be and will be a definite confessing, conditioned from time to time by the particular disposition of her Lord, by the particular Patience and Providence of God, and, in so far as this applies, by the particular time and the possibility offered.

And just because the Church's confession from time to time is a definite repetition of the confession of Jesus Christ, the witnessing to Him through the Church can only (in so far as it is real) occur in *unity* with that which I would like to call the *actualisation* of the confession. The actualisation of the confession is its concrete form as an act of *confessing*, as a *definite* confession made *here* and *now*. In its actualisation the confession necessarily touches those contemporary problems which are agitating the Church and world. It does not do this for the sake of these questions

themselves or for the sake of answering them, but for the sake of bearing witness to Jesus Christ, as it must, at the present moment. It does this because this witnessing, here and now, at the present moment, can most certainly only possess form, tone and colour, and thus can only become audible, in its definite relationship to those questions which are agitating both the Church and the world here and now at the present moment. It certainly does not do this in relation to all—or, at all events, not in equal relation to all—the problems which from time to time are agitating Church and world. Not even does it do this in relation to all the questions which from time to time are known as "burning questions." But it does do this in relation to those questions into whose area and province it sees itself summoned by its own course and by its own inner necessity, through the special responsibility which it has, not towards any kind of situation, but always in some particular situation, towards the special guidance of the Lord of the Church and towards the special witness of the living Holy Scriptures. Consequently it does this most certainly at all times "just as if nothing

had happened"—as certainly as it has simply to bear witness to Jesus Christ to-day just as yesterday, here as well as there. Yet it always does this in face of what actually has happened. It does not speak *to* the situation but *in* the situation—in the particular situation chosen and given its character by it itself—it speaks to the point. It does not draw its speech from the spirit of the age, but it *does* speak to it and with it, not because this is either feared or loved, but because it is the spirit of the Jews and Gentiles (the Jews and Gentiles in the Church too!) who must hear the Gospel. And if there is no problem to which it *has* in this sense to speak of necessity, i.e. on account of the question itself, on the other hand there is no problem to which in principle it *might not* speak.

But this concrete actualisation of the confession in its intervention in contemporary questions will consist in the actualisation of definite *decisions*, consisting of definite affirmations or negations. That "your speech is to be Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay"—where should that apply if not in the proclamation which is the task of the Church? Let it be well under-

stood: In the Church's confession there can be always and everywhere only *one* decision which really matters, i.e. always and everywhere it can only be a question of the affirmation of the Prophecy, Priesthood, and Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and of the denial of every denial and every restriction of this His Office and Work, the denial of every perversion and falsification of His truth. But this very decision, when it is true witnessing to Jesus Christ, can never be removed from space and time, it can never be without a body and hence it can never be without the form, tone and colour of definite decisions in relation to those problems which are agitating the Church and the world here at this present time. Could this decision stand out and spread its fame as the one and only necessary decision, or could the service of the Church be performed through it, if it were to possess no form, tone and colour, but consisted in nothing but a mere recitation of former decisions of others? —even were these others the Prophets and Apostles! There are doubtless many problems which, even in the actualisation of the confession, cannot be decisively spoken of,

cannot be answered with Yes or No, and which, consequently, ought not to be spoken of at all. Perhaps it is not yet the time or perhaps the time has passed! The Church is in *motion* as she actualises her confession. To many contemporary questions the Church can, may and must even be silent with her Yes and No. Perhaps only temporarily must she be silent or perhaps, when the time and the opportunity offered her have changed, she must once again be silent! This will take place where and when she has no room really to bear witness to Jesus Christ, where she has actually no Yes or No to utter which would form such witness. She will then take the best and surest course by simply remaining completely silent with regard to the questions concerned. For the Church cannot speak in a merely meditative and discussive manner in the actualisation of her confession. But with all this it is not denied, but rather asserted, that in the actualisation of her confession, the Church has to speak decisively with Yes or No, has to call white white and black black when the hour strikes and the occasion is here to do this in the act of witnessing to Jesus

Christ. It will not always be here. It may pass. It may be still in the future. But woe to the Church if, when the hour and occasion comes, she is silent, or merely meditates and discusses or just falls back into a bare recitation! Woe to her if she sleeps—not while a variety of great things are going on in the world (she might even occasionally be allowed or even commanded to sleep through such things a bit) but woe to her if she sleeps while Jesus Christ Himself is in sore trial, and we should be watching along with Him! From this point to the open and conscious denial of Him is, we know, but a step. In the actualisation of her confession to Jesus Christ there are questions to which the Church *must* speak and must speak decisively, with a Yes or a No.

One comment on this is indispensable. When the Church must speak in this fashion, she may not let herself be disconcerted or hindered by *approval* of any sort any more than by opposition. It is quite likely that the Church *will not by any means stand alone* with her Yes or No. On the contrary she will hear the same Yes or No from this and that other quarter in a form and sense which

seem to indicate that there it is not primarily a matter of bearing witness to Jesus Christ at all. Now when the Church on her side is engaged in bearing witness to Jesus Christ, with a good conscience, and thus not arbitrarily or in the service of interests and tendencies foreign to her, but on the contrary at her own appointed hour and opportunity—she has no more to fear any *neighbours* than to fear any foes—even were those neighbours the most frightful Liberals, Jews and Marxists! Even when that would bring her into the very middle of a Popular Front! In view of such neighbours it will certainly be the serious concern of her tact and of her tactics, or, to put it better, of her Christian Wisdom, to take care lest she fetch her fire from strange altars, or allow her own fire to be misplaced on strange altars. Rather it will be her earnest concern that her own voice rings out and is distinct as hers right through all apparent or occasionally real alliances. When it has gone so far that the Church must speak her Yes or No, it would be a piece of utterly ill-timed fastidiousness if she were not to speak, or were not to speak clearly and strongly, because she might

feel herself compromised through the presence of these or those perhaps not absolutely trustworthy neighbours, who happen to be saying the very same thing. To embrace a party, i.e. to put one's own cause at the service of any other cause at all, is one thing. To be a party, i.e. in one's own cause and at one's own initiative, because witnessing to Jesus Christ demands that Yes or No be said, is another. Let the Church which never at any time dares to be a party—out of pure anxiety simply of being brushed with a "mudguard," simply of appearing as though she might have embraced a party—look and see whether she is not now really, of necessity, compromising herself, i.e. compromising herself with the Devil, to whom no ally is dearer than a Church, so absorbed in caring for her good reputation and clean garments, that she keeps eternal silence, is eternally meditating, eternally discussing, eternally neutral, a Church so troubled about the transcendence of the Kingdom of God—a thing which isn't really so easy to menace!—that she has become a dumb dog. This is just the thing which must not take place—must not take place *to-day*.

III

"The political problem of our day" is the problem of German National Socialism, which directs itself to the whole contemporary world, and to the contemporary Church.

We are dealing with the question of the relation of the Church to the political problem of our day. Now my opinion is that the *political problem of our day* is the problem of *German National Socialism.* It is my opinion that this problem is directed to the whole present-day world, and also to the present-day Church. The question, summarised in a single sentence, is: Whether German National Socialism (contrary to its declaration that it is a purely German affair, or rather in the real, i.e. *extensive* interpretation of this declaration!) will become to-morrow or the day after, first, the form of Society in Europe, and thus the form of our social structure as well, and so the form of

society which surrounds and conditions the Church in this area, and what attitude we propose to adopt to this possibility.

By calling this *the* political problem of to-day, I am aware that one can judge otherwise and say that the question is *not* so burning and pressing that it may be called *the* political problem of our day; that there are other questions closer to us, and so forth. For the time being I will let this opposing thesis stand over against my own. It is certainly difficult to understand how anyone can talk in this way. You have only to think of what has happened inside Germany itself; within a bare six years a great and in the end not abnormally unreasonable and vicious people is claimed and possessed by a new political system in such a way that to-day every movement, every single movement, of its inner as well as its outer life in all areas is so determined by this system that all resistance, yea even all disagreement, is made "mechanically" impossible. One has only to think that this has happened and is a real fact—only in a neighbour's house, to be sure, but in our next-door neighbour's house, and in the middle of Europe—when you see

that, would you not have to admit that here *the* political problem is raised for us, for the world and for the Church? But that is not the whole story. It has been perceived with perhaps no little insight that National Socialism occupies to-day *outside* Germany precisely the same position which it occupied *inside* Germany in the time of Von Papen in the summer of 1932 (a prediction of Neville Chamberlain). This much is certain, that in the year 1938 it can no longer remain hidden that German National Socialism is in reality reaching out after the *whole* of Europe, and even beyond Europe. It is reaching out with its propaganda, with its foreign policy of menacing force, up to now 100 per cent effective in every case, in Spain at any rate with whole sharp-shooting bombing squadrons—but still much more than all that, it is reaching out with the magnetism of its "spirit," its methods, its tempo, its undeniable vitality or dæmonism, as this all works itself in through the pores of the world outside, and makes its impression secretly or often openly at one point, while at another it at least intimidates and paralyses. Is it reaching out after us as well? One does

not need to be a pessimist to lay it down that National Socialism *has* already grasped at us; it *is* already with us here in Switzerland. In saying this I am thinking least of all of what are called the "Fronts." I am thinking rather of the numerous points in all circles, and in the Christian circles among our people as well, where National Socialism has already broken through. At these points National Socialism is shown that partial favour which displays a definite kindly understanding and prudently differentiates between the thing itself and its ostensible excrescences—the very thing by which one prepares the ground for National Socialism more effectively than if one were to stand in complete and absolute agreement with it! I am thinking of that caricature of a new Helvetic Nationalism devised with the title of "Moral National Defense"[1] (with its accompanying deep-rooted anti-semitism) which will one day turn out to be the Moor, who to-day is doing his duty most thoroughly, even though to-morrow he for his part must go. I am thinking of that whole conception of Swiss neutrality

[1] Not an organisation proper, but rather the name applied to a variety of movements and tendencies in Switzerland to-day, which have the common character indicated by this title (tr.).

which was put forward on the last 1st August[1] and has now been just recently put forward[2] loudly by our Swiss Minister in Berlin for example—a conception which is represented openly by Bundesrat Motta also—if not indeed by our whole Swiss Federal Council. It is a conception according to which the form of our State is a matter of what happens to be our "way" and our taste—a matter of the protection of our native soil and nothing more than that! As if it would then be worth while to stand up for it with deadly earnestness and hold fast to it! As if one had not thereby already faithfully and honourably taken up the fundamental doctrine of National Socialism and planted it in Swiss soil! I make mention of these phenomena in order to indicate that actually, without most of us noticing it, National Socialism has, in fact, already got us to a considerable extent, and it is perhaps only a question of time when it will have got us in a quite different way from to-day. And corresponding phenomena are fairly well represented in all European countries. Thus I

[1] The Swiss National Holiday (tr.)

[2] The occasion of the Swiss National Holiday.

certainly do not understand how anyone can be of the opinion that National Socialism is not *the* political problem of our day. I completely fail to understand, e.g. how anyone, who is not a dreamer or already himself a dishonourable pacemaker for National Socialism, can still occupy himself to-day with Communism and the struggle against Communism and seriously think himself to be occupied with *the* political problem.

But I have no wish to delay myself further with this preliminary question. If anyone will not accept at all my proposition that German National Socialism is *the* political problem of to-day (in so far as that is itself a political proposition), he may let it be. For me too it is, in the end, decisively not a political proposition and does not stand or fall by the strength of the political arguments which can be alleged both for and against it. In the end I am satisfied at least at this point (at which I have myself argued politically) with the admission that National Socialism is *a* political problem of our day, and at least a not entirely unimportant one. I was impressed to hear in a lecture by Professor Karl Meyer in Zurich, that if one

compares the National Socialist Revolution with the French Revolution, then we are to-day in the year 1795. Hence, according to this calculation, we would still have between now and 1798 three whole years before us during which we may have enough of dealing with National Socialism as *one* political problem.

IV

The double character of National Socialism as a political experiment and as a religious institution of salvation shuts out any possibility of dealing with the question it puts "only" as a political question and not, indirectly and directly, as a question of faith as well. Consequently in no event can the Church adopt a neutral attitude to the political problem of today.

WHATEVER be the attitude we may take to German National Socialism, we have first of all to reckon in an honest way with the possibility that the problem, though raised by it, might still not belong to those questions in whose course the Church has to intervene, to speak decisively with Yes or No in the actualisation of her confession of Jesus Christ. We have already seen that among the questions of the moment, there are certainly always certain ones on which the Church may and is meant

to remain silent, because in bearing witness to Jesus Christ which is her sole task, she has nothing—maybe so far, maybe henceforth—to say to them. Does National Socialism belong to the realm of such questions?

Whoever maintains that this is the case, usually stresses the point that with National Socialism it is a question of a *political experiment* like any other such experiment. No reason can be perceived in the bare fact of the existence of a particular state-form, or even in its extension, which could or would have to cause the Church to take up a position in relation to it with a Yes or a No. The Church, so far as she herself is concerned, can exist just as well under an aristocratic or democratic republic as under a monarchy, or even finally under a dictatorship. The Apostles, in the face of the existence of the Roman Empire—embodied at the very date of the Epistle to the Romans actually in a Nero—had nothing either positive or negative to say. We have been often enough reminded of this fact by those who would use it in this connection to bolster up the neutrality of the Church in the face of National Socialism as well.

To this it must first of all be said that National Socialism in the first stage of its power had in fact the character of a political experiment similar to other experiments and that the Church in Germany at that time—this is still my conviction to-day—had the right and the duty to confine herself to giving it, as a political experiment, first of all time and a chance, and therefore to adopting herself first of all a strictly neutral position. In this regard neutrality was in plain terms at that time the form of Church decision enjoined. For the problem directed to the Church then was not the political experiment as such, but the endeavour of the so-called German Christians which was at that time gaining a tremendous footing to pass this experiment off and vindicate its claim as a new divine revelation, and as such to force it upon the Church. Anyone who has not actually lived through this, through the heretical intoxication of that time into which the Church threatened to plunge, can scarcely picture how clearly and how insistently this problem raised itself then. And he can hardly know how difficult it was to hold the Church—or at least a part of the

Church, the beginnings of the present "Confessional Church"—with entreaty, supplication and persuasion first simply to neutrality, i.e. to the protection of her own substance, to Theological Existence to-day,[1] to the warding of the threatening invasion of natural theology; and how difficult it was to hold her back from staining her hands by taking over the alien mission of the falsification and inversion of the testimony to Jesus Christ. "I am withstanding a *theology* which to-day seeks refuge in National Socialism, not the National Socialist ordering of State and Society." I wrote this sentence myself, as late as December, 1933, and allowed it to be printed. And I still think to-day that it was at that time enjoined to oppose the brown inundation first of all with *this dike*: the consolidation of the Church confession in its purity and individuality. We, who at that time had our hands full with this matter, are to-day upbraided and asked why we did not then see through and unmask

[1] *Theologische Existenz Heute* is the title of a series of brochures issued by Karl Barth, first in 1933, in the course of the German Church conflict. The English equivalent, *Theological Existence To-day*, has been adopted by Birch Hoyle in the first English translation from this series (Hodder and Stoughton, 1933).

the true import and character of the National Socialist experiment and why we did not speak and act accordingly. That we simply did not react in that situation as we might have done, had we been political visionaries, is willingly admitted. However, the German Religious Socialists likewise did not do it; at that time one not infrequently saw these people all at once in the very midst of the German Christians. There did not and does not exist any Christian bias which at that time would of necessity have driven us others as Christians in principle and at once to disavow the new political experiment. The fact that this experiment was very uncongenial and suspicious to me personally is quite another matter. (This very thing was so often and so annoyingly directed against me then in Germany, even from the side of the Confessional Church, in order to bring discredit upon my theological work within the Church, because I could not and would not keep it hidden, that I can only laugh at the story publicly circulated in Switzerland to-day that I was at that time something of an admirer of Hitler!) We had, however, at that time—and we still have to-

day!—something more important to do than to give free rein to our sympathies and antipathies. What at that time was perfectly plain for us to see was, on the one hand, the threatening destruction of the substance of Church's confession—and with it the destruction of the presupposition of all repetition and all actualisation of the confession—by a false doctrine arising in connection with the political experiment and without cavil to be recognised as such. And on the other hand, what could clearly be seen was a political Revolution, like many other such which have already occurred, with much fraud and falsehood, murder and slaughter, as these have been distinctive of all revolutions in the past, even of those which one could feel more congenial than this one.

Now the Church did not consist of seers and further she could not, as the Church, consider and treat as Dogma either the political system displaced by the revolution or that taken up by it as such. Therefore she could and had to see at that time in her own confession a question to which she had to answer with Yes or No. But at that time she could not and

had not the right yet to see in the political experiment a question which she had to answer in this way.

Everything has its own time. It was first of all fair and just to give even the political experiment of National Socialism as such its time and chance. What its aim was could certainly then be guessed, but could *not* be known in such a way that the Church, on the basis of *this* knowledge, must or even might take up her stand in relation to it with Yes or No. She had to keep herself to what she knew, and at first she was kept quite sufficiently occupied with that. For this reason then I still remain convinced (and assume my share of responsibility for it) that the Church at that time in Germany did well to go into her starting-position for the discussion with National Socialism, by affirming and re-establishing her "Theological Existence To-day," and did well, for the rest, to adopt that waiting (and that meant first of all neutral) attitude to the phenomenon. If she went wrong—and why should she not have gone wrong, why should not we have gone wrong at that time as well?—then her fault was that she did not

go into her starting-position with anything like the required resolution and consistency with which it had to be entered. But that is once more another matter. Now it is right and excellent when someone assures us to-day, that he had, already in that previous time, known and anticipated everything. I only ask myself and still to-day have no answer to the question, how anyone, even granting this presupposition—provided he was living in Germany himself and honourably sharing the life of the Church in Germany, with anxiety for the witnessing of Jesus Christ and not just for his own political principles—how he could have done and omitted to do anything other than what we at that time did and did not do as the thing enjoined and forbidden us then. No, in this regard I think that I may await in comparative tranquillity the Day of this world's Judgment, along with the brethren in Germany whom this matter also concerns.

But everything has its own time. We are asking now whether or not there is neutrality for the Church in relation to National Socialism as the political problem of *to-day*. By to-day is meant: in the light of what has become

visible in the meantime and is invisible to-day as the import and character of National Socialism in relation to the Church and her witnessing to Jesus Christ. My thesis is that in the face of National Socialism there is no longer neutrality for the Church to-day, no longer delay with her Yes or No. Unfortunately the majority of the Confessional Church in Germany still think there can be. This is indicated by their behaviour in the question of the Oath, and in some other matters. What this majority is doing to-day signifies a marking-time on that starting-position which was at one time enjoined, a marking-time at the "Theological Existence To-day"—of 1933! And the conduct of widely spread and sympathetic Church circles outside Germany consists as well in a marking-time on that starting-position. But here is a fiction at work—so dangerous a fiction that it might well be able to reduce the whole life of the Church itself to a fiction. It is this which must be perceived and uttered to-day.

Everything has its own time. To-day it is senseless to continue to close one's eyes and deny that the import and character of National

Socialism as a political experiment, is a dictatorship which is *totalitarian* and *radical*, which not only surrounds and determines mankind and men in utter totality, in body and soul, but abolishes their human nature, and does not merely limit human freedom, but annihilates it. That National Socialism has so exhibited itself within the six years of its existence, is to-day precisely the fact which can no longer be disregarded from the side of the Church and her message to mankind and to men. But it is just this which constitutes it a question for decision addressed directly to the Church; a question to which the Church cannot but answer with Yes or No. Mark well, this is not something to be said of every dictatorship as such. And further, in another situation and context, still other forms of the State—a monarchy, or a democracy, or naturally another dictatorship than this one—could well become a question for decision directed to the Church. But in our situation to-day we have to do with *this* form of the State, with dictatorship, with *this*, a totalitarian and radical dictatorship. And it must now be said of this political problem so addressed to us that

it is definitely not "only" a political problem. Whatever other forms of the state in other times and under other circumstances might signify for the Church, *this* form of the State, a totalitarian and radical dictatorship, faces us with the question of God, and thus with the question of faith. For to say this is not to fail to recognise that *this* dictatorship can no longer be understood as the carrying out of a divine commission, and that means that it can no longer be conceived as a "higher power" in the sense of Romans xiii. It has made that impossible already explicitly on many occasions, and just recently once again in connection with the question of the Oath. It may be that this dictatorship is still unintentionally in certain relations and functions, the "higher power." It may be that this or that function of a "higher power," as designated in Romans xiii, is still visible even in it. But, if this is so, it is decidedly an unintentioned doxology to the Divine Providence, but certainly not significant of what this dictatorship aims at and is. It has long since assumed predicates which point in quite another direction. According to its own testimony in the

mouths of its most able advocates, it puts forward a claim, best exemplified however in its unequivocally attested and exemplified character as a totalitarian and radical dictatorship, a claim to be in itself and unmediated, a divine power—*the* divine power. In the face of this dictatorship there are only two questions really full of import and significance for the Church and these she must answer: Has the perfect Kingdom of God under the Lordship of the Messiah Himself, already begun here? Or have we here to do with its dæmonic counterpart, the Kingdom of a false "Man-God," under the lordship of a false Messiah? It is impossible to conceive any way in which the Church can withdraw from this question. The first possibility would naturally entail the Church's Yes to National Socialism, and the second, quite as self-evidently, her No. The Church has no other recourse than to choose one of these two possibilities. It is to be noted that we are still speaking of the *political* experiment of National Socialism as such. Even of it, now that its import and character can today no longer remain hidden, it must be said that in relation to it the Church *cannot* persist

in an attitude of neutrality. This very political experiment as such faces us to-day with the question of faith.

And now National Socialism, according to its own revelation of what it is—a self revelation to which it has devoted all the time and chance till now allowed—is as well without any doubt something quite different from a political experiment. It is, namely, a *religious institution of salvation.* One cannot understand it as a political experiment, if one does not at the same time understand it in this other character, as a religious institution of salvation. The differentiating between "Weltanschauung" and politics in relation to National Socialism is just as erroneous in its study-chair unreality as the differentiating between its essence and its excrescences. The justification and the power of the totalitarian and radical dictatorship of National Socialism lies in the presupposition that it itself is able to be and to give to man and to all men everything necessary for body and soul, for life and death, for time and eternity. National Socialism dares to come forward and act as a totalitarian and radical dictatorship because it

has exalted itself and its own fundamental principles, to be a *myth*—principles which are first of all and *per se political*—Germany, nationality, Aryan race, the idea of "leadership," and of dependence on leaders, and the ability to defend oneself, etc. We do not need to look for the secret of this myth wholly in the well-known book by Rosenberg. What that contains is a theory of the myth. And the book is not so important for the comprehension of National Socialism as a fellow-European loyally promoting his investigation through books might at first think. Hitler himself—I have it from the lips of a very remarkable man who heard it with his own ears—has labelled it "trash." The myth is the *life* of the National Socialist "man" with its absolute claims merely *expressing* itself in this or that theory, and in all the strange cult-acts in Nurnberg and elsewhere, but being lived or attempted (by a majority which is hard to reckon numerically) as the life of the German people, the life of its race, its blood, and its soil, a life at once sufficient unto itself and bursting through all bounds, with the whole intensity and also the explosive power of an

everlasting life boldly anticipated here, which at the same time lays its hands in a most realistic and matter of fact way on every technical assistance of modern times. Participation in this life, according to it the only worthy and blessed life, is what National Socialism, as a political experiment, promises to those who will of their own accord share in this experiment. And now it becomes understandable why, at the point where it meets with resistance, it can only crush and kill—with the might and right which belongs to Divinity! Islam of old as we know proceeded in this way. It is impossible to understand National Socialism unless we see it in fact as a *new Islam*, its myth as a new Allah, and Hitler as this new Allah's Prophet. National Socialism is a proper *Church*, a very secular one, but one which from its whole inventory should be recognised as such; a Church of which the real and ardent affirmation is only possible (with or without the Rosenbergian Doctrine) in the form of faith, of mysticism, and of fanaticism. Even to-day that is certainly not always to be seen at the first glance. But just as certainly do we fail to understand the thing profoundly,

if we fail to understand it in this way, and we deceive ourselves if we imagine that we can take up our position in relation to National Socialism in any other manner than that in which we take up a position in relation to a Church, to a religious institution for and a message of salvation.

It is particularly in the light of this second aspect of National Socialism that the *Christian* Church ought to ask herself whether she can really avoid taking up a position towards this thing either definitely positive or negative. What has she to say at all in her witnessing to Jesus Christ, if she has nothing to say here? What would a Yes to National Socialism signify in this position? It would quite plainly signify nothing less than that the Christian Church recognises herself and her message in this other Church, holds it to be the true Church of Jesus Christ, and thus resolves to be absorbed in it with the utmost expedition. This is the intention of the German Christians at present, in so far as these have succeeded in saving themselves from the bankruptcy which has come over a Church party once so imposing. They are what is called the Thuringian German

Christians. But if this Yes should be found impossible, why then there is only No to be said—but then it must be really a No to the whole of National Socialism as such. It is either one or the other. Here a choice must be made. Here evasion or neutrality can only exist where one has either still failed to understand National Socialism or for some reason or other is not ready and determined for the actualisation of the Christian confession of faith.

V

If it is true that National Socialism, as a religious institution of salvation, exhibits all the characteristics of an "anti-Church" fundamentally hostile to Christianity and, as a political experiment, all those of a fundamental dissolution of the just state, then it must become evident in the concrete application of the witnessing to Jesus Christ with which the Church is commissioned, that faith in this witnessing, and affirmation of the inner and outer rule of National Socialism, are mutually exclusive.

EACH of my next three theses begins with the words, "If it is true." It is of course not meant that the truth of the presuppositions in this connection, introduced in this manner, is for myself problematical. But these three theses contain what in my judgment—and in the first instance only in my judgment—is the answer that the Church has to give to the

question of National Socialism. What is said in these three theses I hold to be necessary and right, but in the first instance I can say it only in my own name to the Church, and not in the name of the Church herself. Here, even more than in my third thesis, I must reckon with the possibility that I could be contradicted from within the Church. I can only ask the Church whether she intends really to contradict here, or herself to say the same thing—or perhaps to say something other and better? With thesis VIII we shall come back again to this matter which is by no means unimportant for a formal understanding of what is here brought forward.

I ask, first of all, is it true or is it not true that National Socialism exhibits "as a religious institution of salvation, all the characteristics of an 'anti-Church' fundamentally hostile to Christianity and, as a political experiment, all those of a fundamental dissolution of the just State?" Volumes might be written about both of the constituent parts of this sentence, and, as is well known, volumes have already been written. I cannot then do more than single out what seems to me to speak out with especial clarity.

In the first place: Why talk of an anti-Church fundamentally hostile to Christianity? I would reply: because in what one could call the deity of National Socialism—the National Socialist myth, the God whom the Christian Church serves is absolutely and in principle unrecognisable; and because in the self-absolutising life of National Socialist man the Christian life which finds its consolation and hope in Jesus Christ, is absolutely and in principle unrecognisable. National Socialism has for its part long since declared by both word and deed that it is absolutely and in principle unable to recognise either its own deity in Him whom the Church calls God, or its own life in the Christian life. Its design has become clear in the course of the struggle against the Catholic and Protestant Churches and up to now, despite all deviations in particular cases, it has been systematically carried through. It is plainly this: to make the Christian Church on the one hand so dependent upon National Socialism, and on the other hand so to isolate her, to render her so impotent, so mute and so insignificant, to drive her so into a corner, until she stands there weak and ridiculous, ripe for

death-sentence and ripe for being explicitly and finally replaced by National Socialism itself, the operation of totalitarian and radical dictatorship carried out with ever-increasing consistency and by the dominance of the National Socialist myth already proclaimed as the only means of salvation. Is that not enough? Does not this cold-blooded method adopted in the Church conflict—in which actual violent persecution forms never more than the exception—indicate the thorough and radical nature underlying the whole proceeding on the one side, over against which all attempts from the side of the Church to interpret it differently have long since become something beneath her dignity? Should the Church still not to have cause to become thorough and radical in her turn? What can she still be waiting for? Ought there not still to be room here for witnessing to Jesus Christ? Quite apart from National Socialism's revelation of itself, the Church which cannot have heard the Word of the true God in vain ought to have established from her own perceptions and knowledge, that in the innermost and real and most holy essence of National Socialism, in its mystical faith and

not in any "excrescences," there has entered the field not just another God, not just a strange God, but a hostile God, an evil God, and a hostile, evil service of God.

But the really decisive, biblical, theological reason for the Church establishing this, does not lie in the various anti-Christian asservations and actions of National Socialism. On the contrary it lies in that thing which just in this last week has especially moved us, viz. the anti-Semitism, which is one of its principles. Were this to stand by itself it would quite in itself suffice to justify the sentence; National Socialism is the anti-Church fundamentally hostile to Christianity. Hitler and the others who might in particular be held responsible for the National Socialist anti-Semitism, do not realise, of course, the thing they have touched upon. But that is also not the question. When that occurs which in this matter is now in Germany notoriously resolved upon and already put into practice, namely, the "physical extermination" of the people of Israel, the burning of Synagogues and Scriptures, the rejection of the "Jew God" and the "Jew Bible" as being of the very essence of all that

which ought to be an abomination to the German "man"—then it is *thereby* and *thereby alone* decided that there the attempt is being made to strike a mortal blow into the roots of the Church. Can anyone so much as want to close his ears to all the unutterable misery caused by this anti-Semitic pest, crying to Heaven in every German country? But how is it possible that our Christian ears do not tingle in view of what this plight and malignancy mean? Objectively, what are we then, without Israel? He who rejects and persecutes the Jews rejects and persecutes Him who died for the sins of the Jews—and then, and only *thereby* for our sins as well. He who is a radical enemy of the Jews, were he in every other regard an angel of light, shows himself, as such, to be a radical enemy of Jesus Christ. Anti-Semitism is sin against the Holy Ghost. For anti-Semitism means rejection of the *grace* of God. But National Socialism lives, moves, and has its being in anti-Semitism. Where can Jesus Christ Himself be in sore trial if not just here? What signs must then still come to pass if this sign does not say to the Church that she can have nothing whatever to do

with National Socialism; that she has to awake and at every point along the whole line resolutely to reject it?

Now for the other point. Why talk of a "*fundamental dissolution of the just State*?" I reply: because the office of the state, which in Holy Scripture is set over against and alongside that of the Church, is fundamentally and absolutely denied and disowned in the deeds of National Socialism. According to the Scriptures the office of the state is that of the servant of God who does not carry the sword to no purpose, but for rewarding the good and punishing the evil, for the rescue of the poor and oppressed, and to make room externally for the free proclamation of the Gospel. And National Socialism in its deeds has fundamentally and absolutely denied and disowned this office. As a political experiment it has been revealed as a supreme destruction of all order, all justice and all freedom, and of all authority as well. Is that going too far? I content myself by citing some facts which even the greatest goodwill one may offer National Socialism cannot get rid of, because they are facts.

1. Is it not a fact that National Socialism has founded its rule in Germany on one of the greatest (because most consciously perpetrated) frauds in world history, such a fraud as, to my knowledge, is not to be found either in the beginning of the English or the French Revolutions? I refer to the fraud—and to-day one can *know* that it is a fraud[1]—of the burning of the Reichstag arranged by the National Socialists themselves, by means of which the Press and political activity of the opposition were suppressed and that bare "national" majority in the Reichstag election of 1933 attained, out of which then, again with treachery and violence, there emerged the sovereign lordship of the National Socialists?

2. Is it not a fact that National Socialism to-day in Germany is actively willed and advocated still only by a comparatively small clique, and can only act as representative and government of the German people because it

[1] Hermann Rauschning: *Die Revolution des Nihilismus*, Europa-Verlag Zurich-New York, p. 74; "*The burning of the Reichstag by members of the Party on the order of German ministers, for political purposes*, is the shining example of a method which is universally prevalent." The man who writes that was himself in 1933 a leading National Socialist and knows what he is talking about.

has understood and understands how to make the voice of the rest of the German people, of the real German people, indeed of the whole German people mute and ineffective, through its Press policy, through notoriously falsified elections and through a permanently regulated terrorising of the life of the whole nation?

3. Is it not a fact that, inside the domains of National Socialism, no one in any place or on any day has any safeguard against arrest, being thrown into prison, tortured, put to death and finally handed back to his family as the contents of an ash-urn? And all this at the hands of courts without any public responsibility, without accusation, examination, control or appeal—or just simply at the hands of excited mobs of unauthorised alleged representatives of the "will of the people."

These are some examples—examples which have nothing to do with "excrescences" but all three of which concern what National Socialism either is or is not! How many more could be named! Is there any sense in opposing all this by arguing that within the domains of National Socialism there is also elimination of unemployment, winter-relief.

"Strength through Joy," motor highways and the like, I ask; what change do these make in the really characteristic features of this thing which were no more than barely indicated in the examples mentioned, even if there were really not so much to say to all this, as in fact there is. This deceit, this lack of freedom, this fundamental absence of justice—is that not already enough? The figure of the high-priest, the great Danielic mouth in the ministry of the National Socialist *word* is in itself enough: the figure of this orator, however he, with his remarkable oratory, may be unsurpassed in the whole history of European politics, rich as this is in oratory, enables us to establish that this State exists in and as the dissolution of the just State; this State is anarchy tempered by tyranny, or tyranny tempered by anarchy, but it is certainly *no* State. Or it is still a State, just in so far as, in some remaining parts, it is *not yet* National Socialist?

I can hear the objection that these are all nothing more than political observations and judgments without theological relevance; and that an unconditioned "No" to National Socialism pronounced from this standpoint

would mean that the Church were taking to do with what does not concern her. But with all due deference I would prefer first of all to hear from those who speak in this way whether they still make bold to dispute the above-mentioned facts as facts? And further: whether the Church, according to her own conviction, has or has not a charge—over against the State—to call good good, and evil evil? And finally; if the Church has such a charge, whether she can avoid—according to her own conviction and in the application of her own confession—in the face of even only one of the above-mentioned facts, saying with all definiteness of this thing that it is *evil.* And this without an emotional appeal to moral standards, without wanting to sound the trump of Doom, but with the same objectivity with which she will give the name evil and not good to alcoholism, prostitution, gambling hells, and the like?

But what trumpet must be blown to those who here actually raise the objection that this judgment does not permit of a "biblical foundation"? Why, and in how far does it not? Because the occurrence, relations and persons

in question do not appear in the Bible? Or because, as is well known, the Prophets up to John the Baptist also proclaimed the Word of God in principle without political judgments? Or because, as is well known, the exposition of the Bible should not dare to go beyond the historical explanation of words and facts, because the Bible, as is so well known, has also nothing to say to our time? I cannot help saying it, but that is the most worthless of all objections to make.

But if, despite this objection, it is the case that directly from the standards of the Church it has to be seen and said that here, in National Socialism is an anti-Church fundamentally hostile to Christianity, and a fundamental dissolution of the just State, it must become clear in the concrete actualisation of the witnessing to Jesus Christ with which the Church is commissioned, that there has to be a *choice* between faith in Jesus Christ and the affirmation of the internal and external sovereignty of National Socialism, because they are mutually exclusive, and between them there can be no peace. This must be done in complete disregard of whether this or that group or

party adopts this position or another one. The Church and National Socialism stand over against each other and between them there is this unbridgeable gulf. Is this choice a political one? Now for once, in keeping with a famous example (I mean none other than Luther!) I want really to "be defiant" and say: Yes! by all means it is a political choice! It is a choice where I would rather say "No" with the crudest democratically-minded fellow citizen than "Yes" or "Yes and No" with the most pious fellow-Christian! What is a choice of faith if it never becomes a political choice? And what is a choice of faith to-day if in this thing it never becomes *this* political choice? When, in the Apocalypse, the Roman Empire was finally and conclusively perceived and designated as the Beast out of the Abyss—that was *also* a political choice!

VI

If it is true that no peace is possible between witnessing to Jesus Christ and the sovereignty of National Socialism, then it follows that the Church may and should pray for the suppression and casting out of National Socialism, just in the same sense as in former times and when confronted by a similar danger she prayed for the "destruction of the bulwarks of the false prophet Mohammed."

If it is true that the conflict of the Church and National Socialism is what we have said it is, in what has gone before, then it follows from that that the Church may and must *pray*. That is the central and decisive thing, that which in every case has to be said of every application of her confession, and hence of her decision in the things belonging to National Socialism—assuming this to be her decision. In every such application of her confession,

and so also in this one, she will have to remember the whole of human perversity and need, and above all her own direct and indirect share in the guilt. She will have to remember the boundary beyond which human knowledge and willing of what is better cannot go. She will not speak without being silent; she will not protest without bowing herself. She will not accuse without being herself arraigned. She will neither summon to repentance nor rally to bravery without crying out of her great need—Lord have mercy upon us!

Because of this her denial of National Socialism will be different from other denials of it. The greatness of human confusion and impotence will thereby stand before her eyes —but also the greatness of the divine Promise. And just because of this she will pray.

To pray means that we bring and spread before God our whole neediness, as it is and whatever it might be, that He may take it to His heart. Still more: it means that we confess our thankfulness to Him, as to the One Who has already taken this our neediness, as it is and whatever it might be, to His heart. Still more: that we trust in Him as in the One Who

in His mercy and righteousness in Jesus Christ has taken it, as it is and whatever it might be, away from us. Still more: that we ask Him that He may be pleased to let us feel this our neediness, as a sign of His necessary judgment, but that He may be pleased as well not to let the signs of His Grace be entirely hidden from us.

Now if our present concrete neediness is that we see the Christian Church and the just State together threatened by National Socialism; and if we know, as one must know in the Church of Jesus Christ, that this need is only a symptom of the last universal need of human existence; and if we know that every real suppression or casting out of this need will be in every case nothing but a sign of the divine grace bestowed upon human need in Jesus Christ—*then* praying to-day and in this thing means, in its last concrete pointedness, as petition: to beseech God that He may let His free, unmerited grace become visible to us in the suppression and casting out of this need, and hence in the suppression and casting out of National Socialism.

There is an opinion current to-day which

must be mentioned at this point. It purports to be actually hyper-Christian. It is to the effect that National Socialism could be a merited and just judgment of God upon the world and also upon the Church, which judgment one dare not resist, and in the face of which, Christendom can only passively retreat into the catacombs. What is true in this opinion I have no desire to suppress. We have, at all events, to recognise that the menace of National Socialism is a judgment upon the nations and upon the Church. Were God not to judge the world as it deserves, we should not have to stand under *this* menace! Hence the Church will also have to pray that she may rightly recognise this judgment and learn to embrace it and bear it as God's judgment. But when we have said that we must also say that when Christendom prays—in the catacombs or anywhere else—she will certainly not think that she has to, or even *may*, suppress the fourth petition of our Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread!" She will not just consider the suffering in itself and as such to be a Christian concern, but will remember that Christian suffering is suffering for the sake of

the *confession*! Ready for suffering, she will pray more than ever for the signs of God's Grace, and thus with Luther also for "pious and faithful over-lords, good government." And hence, following the guidance of the last two petitions of our Lord, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"—she will pray as well *in concerto* for the suppression and casting out of National Socialism. And all the more joyfully and trustingly pray, in as much as not the human suffering or not-suffering is *primarily* at stake, but the issue of the conflict between the proclamation of Jesus Christ and the adversary, "der *dich* veracht' so freventlich."[1] That that may happen to the adversary, which is foreseen for it in the Psalms, not only *may* the Church pray, but the Church *must* pray.

I have heard from more than one voice in Germany that the Sunday Church Prayer for the National Socialist Authorities has become a problem to-day. I would not advise the abandonment of this prayer in view of the fact that even within the realm of National Social-

[1] "Who so wickedly despises Thee." From the hymn of Huldrych Zwingli, 1592: "Herr nun selbst den Wagen halt."

ism certain remnants of real authority, incompatible with the others, persist to this day, and by the Hand of Divine Providence, can continue to persist. But at the same time who could fail to understand the heartache which the moment of the petition for the "Führer" must mean to-day for many earnest participants in the worship of God? A prayer for the *ruling National Socialism* and for *its* further expansion and increase simply *cannot* be uttered—unless one wishes to strike his confession in the face and make nonsense of his prayer. But there is one prayer with regard to the *ruling* National Socialism which may be uttered and ought to be uttered. It may and has to be prayed, in all earnestness, by Christians in Germany and throughout the whole world. It is the prayer which was uttered right into the nineteenth century according to the old Basel Liturgy: "Cast down the bulwarks of the false prophet Mohammed!" Those who want to make a too clean-cut division of the two Kingdoms or Offices are as ready, to-day as ever, to appeal to Luther. And unfortunately a good bit of this is justified. But the same Luther prayed in just this way

against the Turks, and indeed did not stop at praying! And there we have it—we stand to-day, all Europe, and the whole Christian Church in Europe, once again *in danger of the Turks*. And this time they have already taken Vienna and Prague as well. "Thy will be done!" "If I perish then I perish!" They really knew that at the time of the old Turkish menace. They knew it better, knew it with more resignation to the will of God and less querulousness than we to-day do. But notwithstanding this and precisely because of this, they prayed, as long as the menace was only a menace that it would pass. And did not Jesus Himself do just that? They prayed that it would pass and be driven away to the honour of God *and* to the preservation of Church and State *and* to the obviating of incalculable affliction for multitudes! We may and have to pray to-day, in this same three-fold sense, for rescue from the danger. I believe this prayer to be the best and the essential thing the Church has to do to-day as the practical proof of her rejection of National Socialism. How the *Schwarze Korps*[1] would laugh if it

[1] Note: Organ of the S.S. Guards.

heard that! But even as we think of such mirth, let it be said once more—the Church must and will, in great need, learn to pray again against the new Turks. If she does that, then she can patiently wait till one way or another it becomes true once again: *Afflavit Deus et dissipati sunt.*

VII

If it is true that the Church, in opposition to National Socialism, has to pray for her own restoration and preservation and therefore also for the restoration and preservation of the just State, then it follows that her witnessing to Jesus Christ implies, as summons to repentance, the summons to co-operation in that which serves this double restoration and preservation.

If it is true that the Church has to *pray* in fundamental opposition to National Socialism, then there are two things we must fasten in mind:

The prayer of the Church *cannot assume a merely negative character.* If she earnestly prays, in the sense of the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh petition of the Lord's Prayer, for the suppression and casting out of National Socialism, then she must at the same time,

pray for the restoration and preservation of the just State.

One notes that the concern in both places, State as well as Church, is not solely or indeed primarily preservation, but *restoration*. If our prayer were to exhaust itself or even to begin with the petition that Church and State, as we still have them to-day outside National Socialism, might be nicely and carefully preserved by God and protected against this inconvenient disturber of our peace, then our prayer would be only too devoid of penitence, and our knowledge of the real meaning of prayer only too deficient! Such impenitent prayer would be worthless in itself and would surely not be heard. In the face of National Socialism rather does there exist occasion to pray, before anything else, for the *restoration* of Church and State. This had to be seen and grasped at once in Germany as far as it concerned the Church and, within the task which corresponded to the sphere of the Church, it led in the first instance to the struggle for the substance of the confession. That she has now also to pray for restoration with respect to the State, has up to now not become equally clear

to the German Confessional Church. But we who are outside Germany have occasion to come to grips, as quickly as possible in the time allowed to us, with this prayer for the restoration of the Church *and* the State. We have the freedom for it. Let us make use of it. Our need is that this take place. For restoration is our need. Let us not deceive ourselves —we would not have had to have the Turks in the middle of Europe to-day if Church and State in the countries of Europe had been and were to-day as they ought to be. Our share of guilt in what to-day exists and threatens is a mass shaken together and running over. In saying this I can scarcely help having in mind the Peace of Versailles. The Peace of Versailles, under which the rulers of the world —and behind them everywhere, in this form or that, stood the Christian Church—beforehand gave National Socialism its justification or at least the semblance of justification and at any rate the direct occasion for its now devastating emotional appeal. But I am really thinking least of all on Versailles. I am thinking quite bluntly on the conduct of the *other* European countries—including our own

Switzerland—in the fourteen years following the world war. I am thinking how these other countries notoriously did not know enough so to honour democracy that the lowly German people, discountenanced in every conceivable manner during these post-war years, could not learn from them to know and to prize the power and blessing of justice, of freedom and of responsibility. We rather gave the Germans the impression of being a played-out, sinking, and already inwardly dead, world. Thus we could not hinder it that the word "liberal"—so fair a word, outside theology—became in Germany a carping and abusive term for every kind of arbitrariness, helplessness, and powerlessness. Our example was by no means so convincingly effective as to be able to hold Germany back from her plunge into stark madness.

And Christendom, the Church in the other countries of Europe—Switzerland again included—did not shine out with such clarity that people in Germany might have had to feel ashamed of having become guilty of so stupid, so complete a fall as has to-day become a reality there. Let us not deceive our-

selves—"Christian Europe" richly deserves to be to-day threatened with ruin. But at the same time let us not deceive ourselves about the *anxiety* to which our Churches and States in their present condition certainly give rise; the anxiety, namely, as to whether they will oppose the "Brown Flood" with a really solid resistance if it should rise still higher, as it gives every promise of doing. On the contrary, it is not by any means impossible that everything we possess to-day—in our States under the heading of right, freedom and responsibility, and in our Churches under that of belief and confession—might smash like matchwood in the moment of the inundation, perhaps not so very differently from what befell Church and State under the Weimar Republic in Germany, and perhaps not so very differently from what our own Swiss people experienced in 1798.[1] We are not enough in earnest to-day in matters of Church and State, we are not so honouring those great names from afar, as would correspond to the good cause of the Christian Church and the just State, and would

[1] *Vide* also p. 19. Prof. Barth refers to the break-up of the old Swiss Cantonal State by the French army in 1798 (tr.).

be necessary to-day for us to be able to resist on the evil day that is coming. The negations of National Socialism as such current among us, will certainly not in the long run sustain the work to be done. Nothing short of a tremendous positivising of our Church and political life could ever be equal to that vitality and dæmonism of National Socialism's onslaught. Are we not startled that actually so little of this is to be seen among us? Both Church and State stand in need of restoration. Hence it is for this double restoration, for a double return effective in both these areas, that we must pray if we really want to pray earnestly to-day. "*Hilf, dass alle Bitterkeit . . .!*"[1] Yes, if we could only sing that again, and not just only sing!

Then and only then would we have the boldness really to beseech God for the *preservation* of Church and State, and for their existence, to-day so acutely menaced by National Socialism. Let this be noted: there exists no occasion to pray for the preservation of Switzerland as such, or Holland or England as such. Even

[1] "Help that all bitterness . . ." From the hymn of Huldrych Zwingli, 1529: "Herr nun selbst den Wagen halt." (tr.)

Hitler will not easily move our mountains and lakes from their places. And what of our dialects and cantonal dress, and our Basel, Bern and Zurich heads in their delightful distinctiveness? Surely we might well be allowed to cultivate these in a reasonable way, even under a "Reichsstatthalter."[1] The same holds good for the corresponding stage properties of the other countries. But there certainly does exist occasion to pray for the preservation of our Swiss Reformed Churches, i.e. if they really are such, or will to become such again. And there certainly does exist occasion to pray for our Swiss form of state and society, if it is really founded on freedom, justice and responsibility, and hence if it is really the form of the just State, or wishes to become so once again. We see that here everything depends on restoration. For who will joyously and earnestly pray for the preservation of all these things, who has not first of all prayed for their restoration and thus that they may be worthy of preservation? But because we pray for their restoration, we may immediately also summon up courage really

[1] i.e. a Lieutenant-Governor of the Reich.

to pray earnestly for their preservation as well.

The second thing we must bear in mind is that the matter *cannot rest* with the prayer of the Church as such. When we earnestly pray for the suppression and casting out of National Socialism and hence for the restoration of Church and State, then we are ourselves *eo ipso* summoned to do what is humanly possible towards that for which we pray. A prayer in which one would avoid or wished to avoid such a summons would be a worthless, useless one. A Church which prays earnestly will be clear that it is time to set to work on her *own* restoration and preservation. And there is *no one* in the Church who cannot take his share in this work, whether his part consist in intensifying and consolidating parish life, or in the advancement of the eldership, missions, public worship and especially preaching, or in showing the Church's outer and inner unity and order, or in re-establishing her theology and confession. But, at the same time, an earnestly praying Church will not be able to pretend that the restoration and preservation of the just *State* is no concern of hers. There are many points

in the life of the Christian Church seen in the light of which co-operation in the restoration and preservation of the just State—not as the Anabaptists thought, the establishment and defence of a Kingdom of God on earth—becomes a task which those who in all seriousness will to be Christians cannot evade. Here I can only indicate the connections: If the Church's form of life is the congregation as the communion of believers in an earthly body under a heavenly Head—One is your master, and ye are all brethren!—then it is inconceivable how, in the light of this, a form of life corresponding to this her own form could fail to be sought in the political area as well. Further: if the faith of the Church is the faith which believes that God intervenes on behalf of sinful man, as a poor man to whom God by His own agency sees justice done, then he who so believes will as such be summoned to recognise a parable of his own need before God in every situation where he hears human crying out for human justice. And he will also be summoned—and again, as in a parable of that for which he himself has God to thank—to make, as his cause, the service of setting up

and preserving human right and human justice. Further: where the freedom of the children of God is really proclaimed and believed, there the confidence must prevail that even the earthly external ordering of human affairs is best carried out if it appeals to the free man instead of taking freedom away from man. Further: where prayer is made for lawful authority, as should be done by the Christian congregation, according to the New Testament, every single praying Christian openly assumes his own share of responsibility for the existence of a lawful authority. Does all this mean a Christian glorifying and absolutising of democracy? I think not. All that has been said could apply to an ordinary monarchy, but certainly not to tyranny or anarchy. How anyone, coming from the faith and life of the Christian Church, could consent to tyranny and anarchy or approve of it or wish it or actively take part in it is beyond comprehension.

But from the faith and life of the Christian Church, there is a way leading directly to co-operation in the external, wordly and extremely relative but nonetheless divinely willed and commanded work of a just State in the sense

indicated. To the work of its *restoration* we say, but say with this then, and in the same measure, also—to the work of its *preservation*. Even the just State cannot and never will be faultless. On the contrary, it will always have its ills in one way or another. And for that very reason it requires and will always require restoration. But wherever the just State is not yet dissolved, where it has not yet succumbed to anarchy or tyranny, it is worth preserving from anarchy or tyranny, and worth defending from these in emergency. And if no one else were to say it, the Church would have to say, what our "Swiss National Defence"[1] could never say, that this defence is *in principle* necessary. In this connection one might bear in mind the already almost legendary figure of the "Czech soldier"[2] to whom in September, 1938, I gave credit for fighting and suffering—if things were to have come to such a pass—not only for the freedom of Europe, but also for the Church of Jesus Christ. I still stand to-day by this sentence although in a material

[1] cf. p. 18.

[2] A reference to a letter written by Prof. Barth during the crisis of September, 1938.

sense it has now become null and void. The Church cannot wield the sword: the Church cannot wage crusades. How should she? But the Church in all her members forms a solidarity with the State which, as a just State, as a State not yet lost to tyranny or anarchy, actively resists the radical dissolution of the just State. This is not by any means to be said in every relationship of any Church to any State. There are wars to which the Church will have to be neutral; there are others which she will have to oppose. But on frontiers where the question at stake is on one side the State which still remains the just State; and on the other, the radical dissolution of the just State—on these frontiers it must be said that the cause of the Christian Church is being defended indirectly in and along with that of the State in question. The frontier between Czecho-Slovakia and the Third German Reich in September of last year was just such a frontier. There was more at stake there than the German claim to the Sudeten area. The thing at stake there was the continuing advance of the Turk. I hold for well-done, now even as then, the fact that in this situation I

comforted the Czech Christians by saying that the Christian Church would stand behind the war thrust upon their country. Whatever the Church may have to say, or not have to say, to other wars—in this regard we speak also of the Church and the political question of *to-day* this is certain: as a praying Church she must support armed defence against the advancement of the dissolution of the just State, just as she would support a police measure taken in the normal way. And further this is also certain: the members of the Church, in their capacity as members of the just State, have then surely in a military respect also to render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's. I finish here with this: would that the Church had concerned herself much more seriously with the restoration of the just State before matters had reached such a pass that she is concerned for its preservation in *this* form.

VIII

The fact that what was assumed in theses V–VII is not yet recognised and acknowledged as true by all in the Church, does not release those who have recognised it as true from the task of bearing witness to it, in unity with the confession of Jesus Christ as true and hence as binding. If these are erring or false witnesses, then it is the business of those who contradict to convince them of it through the power of a counter witness with a corresponding basis. The unity of the Church, threatened to-day also by the question of National Socialism, can only be safeguarded by speaking out and not keeping silence on what in one way or another is recognised as truth in the decision of faith.

WHAT is said in this last thesis is intended to be a methodical memorandum for discussion of my lecture.

Whoever to-day brings forward the answer to National Socialism which I have advanced as plainly as possible in theses V–VII, must expect from many sides—not only from Germany—the reproach that he in the name of the Church is passing judgment in a matter wherein the Church as such has not yet even spoken, in which she has not as yet even so much as come to agreement. To begin with, I would like to explain with thesis VIII that I am well aware of being able here to speak first of all only in my own name. But the reproach is carried too far when it comes to have the meaning that in this matter no decisive judgment whatever could or might be passed in the Church; as though it were a species *lèse-majesté* for all kinds of "dissentients" when someone ventures to utter a judgment in this matter—first of all in his own name, but by no means "only" as his political judgment, but as his Christian witness and confession. In this regard the Zurich newspaper has even gone so far as to speak of a "Papacy" resident in Basel —luckily however many-headed!

The question here is one of a misunderstanding to which some words have to be

spoken. The Church of which we have been speaking is the Evangelical Church in which no one has the right to hold back with his witness and confession until the contents of this are pronounced *de fide* by some higher Church-court. But also for this reason no one has the right to complain when he must listen to such a witness and confession, even although at first this is not yet his own! And he has also no right to complain when he must hear and take notice that the other is *not* bringing forward what he has to say as a personal—where possible "only" political—expression of opinion; but that he is bringing it forward in proper form, i.e. in unity with the confession of Jesus Christ, as he sees this, and hence in all seriousness as true and *binding*. Can there be and may there be in the Church speech which is not *binding*? Would it be a witness and confession, if I did not thereby make the "unreasonable demand" of the other that he agree with me? Would we do one another honour by dispensing with this "unreasonable demand" and limiting ourselves to pure expressions of our own personal opinions? What have we to say to one another if we do not

dare to speak bindingly with each other? Is not the very fact that so wretchedly little binding address is heard in the Church accountable for a goodly share of her misery—is it not perhaps *the* misery?

But what can and should that man do who must listen to such bindingly intended address and at the same time believes himself, temporarily or finally, not to be in a position where he can consent? Of all the things he can do surely the most foolish is to begin speaking of a "Papacy," and alone, or with his friends, becoming enthusiastic over the sublime thought that he can never be constrained to agree with any such binding address. Oh, how heavy is the weight of nineteenth-century theological Liberalism upon us still! How deeply it has sunk even into our supposedly "positive" bones!

Certainly it might well be possible that a witness and confession put before the Church such as mine in theses V–VII, could be the witness and confession of an erring or false witness! That it could be that, is just the burden one who ventures such a witness and confession has to take upon himself. But, that

it *could* be that, is *not* the thing that has to be asserted by those others who, temporarily or finally, consider themselves obliged to hold something else as true. As if that were not self-evident! But that it *is* in error, that it *is* false—this is the thing these others have to assert. Then they need not whimper and whine about coercion. If their cause is a good one, how should they be coerced? But what have these others really to do? They have to *set over against* this witness, in the same bindingness, a firmly-grounded opposing witness. They have to *rely* on the strength both of their own good cause and that of their opposing witness. And then they have to *leave* it to the witness of the Holy Spirit in the congregation, i.e. to the further common enlightening through the Holy Scriptures. So then, if this present lecture does not please them, they should just as openly and distinctly state its *opposite*, e.g. that the Church has to say Yes or Yes and No to National Socialism, that it is not the Turk, and that we have not to pray and work against it as though against the Turk. But please; all this, yes, but not in the form of a personal expression of opinion; all this, but not just

"only" as political judgment—but all this *likewise* as witness and confession, as application of *their* confession in the Church, as *their* earnestly grounded "unreasonable demand" responsibly directed to the rest of the Church. Whether the representatives of a cause dare to bring it forward *bindingly*, is the test of confidence in the goodness of that cause. If they do not dare to do this then they might just as well be silent; in any case one needs to listen with only half an ear to those who speak only half aloud. And this test can not be spared those who might be of another opinion in this thing occupying us to-day. We do not wish to hear from these that they consider themselves free to hold another opinion. Nor do we wish to hear this their other opinion. We wish to hear the confession of their *other faith*.

For just as certainly as the decision in the face of National Socialism is a decision of faith —even so certain is it that in the things pertaining to this decision, first of all in the Church herself, faith conflicts with faith. It is one faith against another faith, one spirit against another spirit, and in the end and always—one God against another God. It has always been

so when the Church has once again had to wrestle with the repetition and application of her confession. Such times have always also signified, first of all, a *threat* to her unity. Her unity is threatened to-day by the question of National Socialism. This question is not the only threat to her unity. But it is one of them: and to-day it threatens more urgently than any other—very much more urgently than, e.g. the questions put by the old "tendencies" in theology. When National Socialism came on the scene in Germany there came a new line of division into the Church, striking right across all old trenches, and it was right that it should have been so. Among us as well, the spirits will divide themselves on the question of National Socialism. They are doing it already to-day, and doing it otherwise than yesterday and the day before yesterday.

But how shall the unity of the Church be made secure in the face of this threat? Certainly not by silence on the part of those very people who ought to be speaking out of their faith, in one way or the other, from the one side or the other. And certainly not by all kind of tolerant chatter, or of non-binding

exchange of opinion. The unity of the Church will only be made secure by our speaking out in faith, from this side and that, just as long as we can still speak with one another. Already this can no longer be done in Germany. It may also come to be impossible among us too. We have also to reckon with this situation. And if we come to no common decision, then no amount of peace-loving will be able to prevent this state of affairs from stepping in upon us. It is still not here, or at least in general it is not here. We can still—at least in part—speak with one another. Let us not lose a moment with unnecessary phrases! The hour is too grave. Let us in God's name say nothing other and nothing less than that which we must say to each other in uttering what each one of us in the decision of faith recognises!

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"The course of events has led him to the conviction that certain things are happening in the world today which compel a judgment from a Church that confesses Christ. If she is silent or neutral in face of the claim of National Socialism, she is taking service under a strange and evil god. It is noteworthy that this conviction does not rest on the persecution that the Churches are suffering in Germany. Dr. Barth takes a broad moral standpoint. National Socialism proclaims itself to be fundamentally anti-Christian by its persecution of the Jews. National Socialism is also shown to be anti-Christian because it calls evil good and good evil, and thereby destroys all order, all justice, and all freedom, and all authority as well."

A. S. Duncan-Jones in *The Spectator* (London)